WHAT IS ISLAM?

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book is specially intended for non-Muslims and for those Muslims who have never known Islam in its original purity. I regret that the limitation of space has not permitted me to deal at large with some of the topics which have been just touched upon but which require detailed elucidation. I hope, however, if the Creator so wills, to return to them in a later book. I am very much indebted to my friend, Mr. Mohammad Naseem, whose suggestion led to the present work. I am also grateful to Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, on whose suggestion, I made certain additions in the first and fifth chapters of this book.

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In the Name of the Gracious God

Chapter I

WHY RELIGION ?

The events of the past two decades have created a universal sense of bewilderment. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries men believed that with the progress of science and the increased control over nature, which it must bring, man's lot will steadily improve; the spread of education and enlightenment will bring such a breadth of vision that men will cease killing and tormenting each other. The shock of two wars has been enough to shake this false confidence in man's future; and yet, strange as it may seem, ideas of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries persist in the solution proposed and remedies suggested for the evils of mankind. In spite of repeated failures, Europe continues to repose her faith in political and economic revolutions as the only solution for the problems of civilization, and we, who live in the East, dance to the tune set by our masters. Darwin and Machiavelli rule

the World, in spite of bitter experience to the contrary.

An analysis of the causes that have led to the present chaos and of the failure of Western methods to deal with the problems of civilization, reveals that all the social creeds, political movements and philosophies of life born in the stress and conflict of the modern age, from the individualistic democracy of the laissez'-faire period down to the Russian Communism, share this belief in common : that all the evils from which mankind suffers, are due to defective political and economic systems; in other words, to the defects of the external social environment, in which men are born and bred, and that if only our political and economic system is set aright and social surroundings changed for the better, all the evils in the world will disappear, and men will begin behaving like angels without the least effort at individual self-improvement.

While it is true that human beings are influenced by their environment and social surroundings, it is fundamentally absurd to think that they are mere creatures of their social environment. Political and economic systems do

play a part in moulding men's character and conduct, yet it is no less true that political and economic systems themselves are shaped by men's desires and inclinations, their beliefs and thoughts. If human conduct and character were wholly formed by economic and political systems, as the Communists hold then, there is no meaning in abusing the Capitalists, and holding them responsible for the injustices they have done to society. The Capitalists, on this theory, are completely innocent of the economic exploitation of the Proletariat, for their habits and behaviour are not of their own making. One wonders why the Communists are so hard on these poor, innocent and blameles creatures who exploit the world not by choice but by the compulsion of their social environment. It is useless to blame and condemn those who have no power over themselves, who are irresistibly driven forward by a social system not of their own making. On this theory, there is neither good nor evil; neither justice nor injustice in the world. Things are as they are, because they could not be otherwise. There is no rational choice or freedom in the universe.

Under the influence of Darwin and Evolution the West has neglected the other aspect of the truth, that men are rational beings, free to choose the good from the evil or do the opposite, irrespective of any influence to the contrary. It is true that they are influenced by the social and economic conditions of life but it is equally true that their own moral ideas and spiritual consciousness modify to a large extent the social conditions in which they live. It is only when society as a whole neglects the moral education of its members and fails to rouse their spiritual consciousness by active effort, that it falls helplessly under the control of economic conditions which then completely determine its form and direction. It is thus a matter of free choice whether a society controls and modifies the material conditions of its existence or throws itself at the mercy of economic and social forces.

If we accept moral freedom as an admitted fact and cease to regard man as a mere machine or animal, completely controlled and shaped by external influences, then it becomes a matter of the highest importance to find out the true ends of life, to discover the right ideals

which should govern man's social and political conduct and the appropriate means, through which those ends and ideals are to be attained; for if we go wrong in the choice of either ends or means, we are bound to suffer from the consequences of a wrong choice. It would not do to reply that our ends and ideals are inevitably formed for us by the material conditions of existence and that ethical values and moral ideas are the product of historical forces beyond our control. Such a theory cuts at the very root of human freedom which, as we have seen, is an admitted fact. Man is a free moral agent and no mere automation or brute, as the evolutionists of the Marxian type think. He is influenced by external factors and material conditions but not wholly governed by them; for, if he were, then no question of praise or blame, of good or evil, right or wrong, justice or injustice could have arisen, moral freedom being indispensable to such notions.

As soon as we come to the question of ends and means, two problems face us. Firstly, to decide what are the true ends of life, towards the attainment of which our individual and social life should be directed; secondly, to

discover, how in face of man's natural love of ease and comfort and his ingrained aversion to accept restrictions which hinder the satisfaction of immediate desires,are the ideals and ends in question to be attained. All achievements, even the smallest, such as the passing of an examination, success in business, or the attainment of military glory, demand on the part of individuals, who strive after them, a certain amount of self-control and sacrifice of those gratifications which stand in the way of success. When it comes to the attainment of life-ends, it is clear that a far greater measure of self-control and sacrifice will be required.

The first problem that of the true end of human existence, cannot be solved unless we first know the meaning behind life, the purpose which it is seeking to achieve, our own position in the universe and the ultimate end, towards which things are moving. It is clear that, if we desire the social and collective life of man to be based on rational order, we cannot but presuppose rational order in the universe; for in a universe without purpose and rational meaning no orderly social life can be built and no appeal can be made to ideas of

social justice, decency and fairness. If life is a movement, it must be a movement with direction, since no movement is conceivable without direction. In an aimless and directionless world-movement you cannot suddenly wake up one day and begin shouting about the need for order, justice and purposiveness in human affairs. To your appeal for economic-justice and social order, the capitalists, the bourgeoise, the robbers and the brigands, all those who have grabbed power and wealth, and all whose conduct and behaviour happens to be anti-social, will reply (and a very effective reply it would be) :"Sir, we are part of a meaningless, irrational, and aimless movement, so please stop talking of reason, and justice. Irrationality, disorder, and injustice lie at the very root of life."

It is here that religion comes in and states in clear terms the meaning behind life and the goal it is seeking to achieve. As against Darwinism and Marxism which conceive of life as a mere accident and refuse to recognise either a goal or direction in the world movement and life-process, religion assures us that earthly life is not the end of human existence, that death

does not mean extinction and that the soul of man survives after death to continue its journey towards God, the ultimate end of all life and being. Religion thus stands for orderliness, rationality and purposiveness in human affairs in contrast to Darwinism and Marxism which leave us bewildered as to the meaning of life and our own individual aspirations. If death and decay, and not ultimate life, is the destiny of the individual, as Western civilisation teaches us and as Marx and Lenin maintain, then the question necessarily arises as to why we should care for social ends or human welfare, and sacrifice the pleasure of a short and transitory existence which is to end in sheer non-existence for the sake of other human beings who are as well doomed to decay and extinction.

Coming to the next problem, that of the realisation of true ends, we find that all realisation involves self-control and sacrifice of immediate satisfactions. Mere knowledge of ends will not give you the power or the motive-force to work for them in the face of evident loss of comfort and pain of struggle that the effort involves. The maintenance of

order and justice in social life demands of the individuals composing the social group, willingness to forego personal pleasure and immediate satisfaction whenever these stand in the way of distant and ultimate ends. The reply may be given that the State and Law, as the expression of its authority, ensure the maintenance of order and justice and exercise control over those elements of society which, in pursuit of their personal ends and individual gratifications, ignore the requirements of social justice. An analysis of this answer will reveal its inadequacy. In the first place a state or government is nothing more than a group of individuals issuing orders to the rest of society. In any society, whether capitalistic or communist, some must lead and others must be led. No society, not even the utopian society of Marxian Communists, can consist of all leaders and no followers. These are the leaders of a society who control the government and make the laws. What assurance there is that these leaders will always keep in view the requirements of social justice and work selflessly towards social welfare? It is well known that power inevitably corrupts those who wield it.

Therefore leaders, politicians and statesmen cannot be expected to continue for any considerable period of time to frame laws, based on the claims of justice. It may be argued that the mass of people and public opinions will exercise a certain amount of check on leaders and politicians. But having had experience of modern democracy, we can no longer rest assured that public opinion is always right as to the deeper problems of social life. Experience has shown that the great majority of people are driven to act and think by their physical desires and immediate material interests which, more often than not, adversely affect the more distant but real interest of the community. And what is public opinion after all, but the opinion of the more vocal and intellectual section of the community? It is the leaders of opinion who mould the opinion of th masses.. When moral degeneration overtakes leaders and politicians, the contagion inevitably corrupts the mass of people.

We thus find that neither the state nor the law can, by itself, produce social justice, since law is the expression of the will of either the few or the many who compose a political

group, and, unless we ensure that the few and the many will love virtue and justice and believe in moral ends to the point of being able to make sacrifices for them when called upon to do so, there will be no justice in society. But even if the law were just, it would lend itself to manipulation and perversion by those who work it, if they are inclined to be unjust. It is a matter of common experience that the lawyers habitually manipulate the law to support unjust claims and shift the blame from the guilty to the innocent, and successfully create effects the very opposite of those intended by the legislators. The fact is that if the moral attitude of men and women is unjust, mere legislation can no more produce justice than communism or capitalism can produce social welfare. It is the moral attitude of man that counts in the last resort, and is the only factor in human behaviour that can be fully depended upon. Those who look to the state and the law for creating the conditions of justice and welfare, ignore another very important aspect of the case, and it is that the state and the law touch a very small part of human life, much the larger part of it being left completely un-

controlled, where the law and the state cannot exercise their authority. Let the reader of these pages consult his own experience and tell how many times he has seen people injuring each other's interests without the hand of law preventing them from so doing. Social opinion covers a much greater range of men's conduct and is a much more powerful force than law. But it is a double-edged weapon. When based on false values and ideas, it may as well prevent men from being just, noble and lofty. That is why all great men have had to rebel against the moral standard of their society. What is called conscience is nothing else than moral values upheld by a particular society and that is the reason why the 'conscience' of men living in different societies is so different from each other. In the West sexual relations with other unmarried women do not excite the same feelings of abhorrence and condemnation as they do in the East. For how many centuries Hindu society permitted the burning of widows along with the dead body of their husbands without ever feeling the pangs of conscience. Conscience is little more than custom etherealized.

It is thus plain as the day that without a living faith in God and without a system of legal precepts and moral values founded on His will, no stable social structure can be built. Unless we consider ourselves responsible beings who will have, one day, to render our account to Him, neither law nor the state, neither conscience nor social opinion can keep us steadfast on the path of virtue. You can elude the police, manipulate the law to suit your purposes and even humbug public opinion, but you can neither deceive God nor elude Him, for He is within you, without you, ever watchful, ever vigilant. It is only belief in God and in the hereafter that can make men truly virtuous, law-abiding and give them moral courage to face the tyranny of social opinion. To quote Betrand Russel, "A creed or sentiment of some kind is essential to social cohesion; but if it is to be a source of strength, it must be genuinely and deeply felt by the great majority of the population."

So then there is no escape from the necessity of a creed which shall govern our inner life and make us self-disciplined. The choice, therefore lies not between creed and no creed, between

God and no God, but between a true creed and false creeds, between the true God of Righteousness and false gods having existence only in the imagination of their worshippers. If you disbelieve the true God of religion, false gods like the Nation, the Race or the Proletariat will take His place, since nature knows no vacuum and will tolerate none. It is thus a choice between God and the devil, and choose you must between the two. A social group without a god, without a creed and without a faith will remain a powerless and ineffective entity while one with a false god, believing in nationalism, racial superiority or international proletariat, will be a force acting in the wrong direction and a power working for evil purposes. The salvation for mankind lies in accepting the true God of humanity, not merely in a haphazard, indifferent manner, but with the fervour intensity of living faith and not merely accepting Him but obeying Him and refusing to obey any other authority like the state, the nation, the race, the dictator or the parliament which does not submit to His will and base its commands on His revelation.

It is clear from what has been said above

that belief in the existence of God is not a metaphysical theory. On the other hand, it is first and foremost a philosophy of action. The difference between those who believe in God and those who do not, is not a mere difference of opinion as to the nature of the ultimate reality. It is a difference going deep into the fundamentals of life and conduct. For belief in the Divine Being is invariable, associated with certain ethical and moral values which the believer must uphold against all other values in whatever sphere of life he happens to move, if his belief is really sincere. To believe in God is, therefore, not mere to enter into personal relation with Him; it is to fashion individual and collective life so as to bring it in harmony with the Divine Will. Man's relation with his Creator is furthered and strengthened in proportion as he changes his external environment and collective material life to make it accord with his vision of reality. Mere affirmation of the Divine existence and contemplation of His attributes are not enough, unless the believer also takes part in the conflict of the good against the evil which goes on for ever in the social and collective life of humanity, because

it is only through such participation that he can prove the reality of his belief and its effectiveness for social life. God requires from us not a life of passive submission but one of active virtue in the widest sense of the term, not merely in private and family life but also in the political and economic spheres. If a man is just and virtuous in the restricted sphere of his immediate social surroundings, but actively supports, or passively submits to those elements and forces in the political field which stand for reaction in justice and exploitation of the weak, then he is pennywise and pound-foolish in a moral sense.

And here we come upon the connotation of the word 'religion.' In the Western sense of the word religion is a matter of personal and individual life, having little of no connection with social and collective affairs. It is more or less a metaphysical theory about the nature of the ultimate reality and the creation of the world. If this interpretation of the word religion be accepted, then belief in God and in the after-life cannot form part of religion. A person believing in God must necessarily believe in certain ethical and moral principles

which are inseparable from belief in the Divine Being. Now, to hold that a particular set of values and principles is essential for the well being of man and for the attainment of Divine favour, is to make an attempt to realise them in actual life. This must of necessity involve a further attempt to change the material environment in a certain direction which will make it easier to practise and realise those values and ideals. Is such an attempt consistent with a religious creed meant only for the personal life of the individual? It is clear that either we should make an attempt to change the direction of social and political affairs in the manner required by our ethical and moral values and ideals or agree to surrender them and remain content withholding them as an intellectual conviction without force or effect in the affairs of men. In reducing religion to the position of a personal matter, the West forgot that in human affairs no matter is purely personal. The individual as a social unit is constantly affecting and being affected by other individuals. Even the thoughts we think have a social significance. To make religion purely a personal matter in the life of the in-

dividual is the surest method of killing it outright. Since religion is a certain attitude towards the problems of life, no limits can be set to its influence. You cannot say to me, "Please do not bring your attitude of life to bear on social and political matters." If you say so, I would turn and reply, "Sir, my attitude is inseparable from me. It must follow me wherever I go and whatever I do. My fundamental beliefs and my attitude to life and its problems must influence my conduct and decisions in whatever sphere of life I happen to move."

Let the reader of these pages note that Islam is not a religion, if we understand by that word something purely personal and confined to individual life. Islam does not allow any such bifurcation. It treats life as a whole and cannot admit of watertight compartments in it. It is fundamentally an attitude of life issuing in certain ethical values and ideals and a particular system of law covering the whole range of human and social activities. Based upon a belief in the oneness of God and in the afterlife, it lays down definite principles of morality and of law, which ought to govern

individual conduct and social affairs. It is thus more in the nature of a movement, a system of beliefs and of moral and legal precepts spreading itself over the entire field of human life.

Chapter II

WHY ISLAM AND NOT OTHER RELIGION ?

Having recognized the need for religion and belief in God, one may ask how in the midst of a busy life with so little leisure for detailed study, one may discover the best religious creed among a number of competing religions each claiming to be exclusively true. The task is not so difficult as it is supposed to be, nor does it involve scholarly studies. Take the fundamental tenets of any religion and its practical injunctions and examine them. You will easily understand the kind of life which it desires its followers to live and the character it tries to build up. Apply the test of practicability, that is to say, whether average men and women can live upto its injunctions and pronibitions without straining their powers of endurance too much. This test is necessary, because religion is not the sole monopoly of a few exceptional individuals. Religious creeds

which call upon ordinary men and women to rise to heights of selflessness and nobility which is attainable only by the exceptional few, can never be successful in their mission. Our conceptions of nobility ought to be modified by the weaknesses of human nature. Take for example the cult of non-violence preached by Mahatma Gandhi. It is supposed that a man who does not use physical violence is somehow nobler than one who does. Now, apart from the fact that this is not true, even if it were, it would be expecting too much of the average men and women to think that they will bear all the evils and injustices heaped upon them without physical retaliation. Moreover, it is a false view of nobility, since it assigns a passive role to the pious and the virtuous, leaving the active role to unscrupulous opportunists and men who love power for its own sake.

Secondly, a religion which is sincere in its efforts to improve human relations, should be clear and unambiguous in regard to its fundamental beliefs and precepts. Religious creeds shrouded in philosophical mysteries, can afford intellectual pleasure to a few men

of intellect, but they can never inspire ordinary men and women to be steadfast in virtue. There is nothing so simple and clear to an average intelligence as truth. The true religion is always simple, both as regards its beliefs and its practical injunctions. A religion, encumbered with profound philosophies and elaborate ceremonials requiring the guidance and help of philosophical commentators and priests learned in [illegible]ial, can appeal only to a few eccentrics. It demands too much leisure and time, as well as dependence on others.

Creeds which are based on excessive optimism or excessive pessimism are always unpractical and utopian. It is because of its pessimism that Christianity ceased to be a living force soon after the death of its founder. Pauline Christianity is based upon the doctrine of original sin. It presupposes that man is by nature a sinful creature. This led to the doctrine that Christ has atoned for all the sins of mankind, as if any human being could save other from the consequences of their own sins. The notion of original sin also led to self-suppression and self-mortification which in the end produced the revolt against religion.

Buddhism also is similarly obsessed by the evil and suffering in the world. Buddha could not bear the sight of human suffferings and retired to the forests to seek refuge from pain.

The case of over-optimism is illustrated by the creed of Marxian Communists. Can any man of sense believe that mere abolition of private property and spread of education would make men virtuous and well-behaved? If poverty or lack of education is the sole cause of evil in society the rich, the well-to-do and the educated classes should have been the very paragons of excellence, instead of the selfish creatures they generally are. If economic well-being alone could produce love of justice, one wonders why the capitalists, the financiers and the bankers try to do each other down in the face of dangers so obvious as Communism. On this theory one would expect them to be fair and virtuous at least in relation to themselves, as this would serve their class interests.

The distinctive characterstics of Islam as a world religion are its simplicity, its explicitness and its highly realistic attitude towards human problems, leaning neither towards excessive

optimism nor excessive pessimism, and enjoining moderation and balance of mind in all things. Islam tolerates neither those who would make of life an unending revelry, a sort of drunken feast, nor those who would empty it out of all joy and pleasure, zest and adventure. It has no room for puritans and ascetics on the one hand, and for moral anarchists and lovers of license, on the other. It allows freedom and satisfaction of all human desires and instincts, not excluding the instinct of war and revenge, within certain specified limits but not outside of them. It rejects the doctrine of original sin and maintains that all men and women are born completely innocent and it is only by their own deeds and actions that they acquire good or evil. Islam recognises that social, and external conditions have a great influence in shaping men's conduct and character, and, therefore, to set right the social, political, and economic system in consonance with its own spiritual and moral ends. But is does not, like Communism and other Western 'isms,' consider that mere improvement of social, political and economic conditions will make men virtuous and just. It ad-

vocates and insists upon both individual reform and self-discipline through belief in God and the hereafter, as well as social and economic reform, because the spiritual and material aspects of life are closely interdependent, and if any one of the two is neglected at the cost of the other, the balance and poise of social life is bound to unhinged. But Islam lays the final responsibility on the individual for all his virtues and vices. The individual cannot plead, "I was born in an evil environment and therefore all my faults should be laid at the door of society." To such pleadings it replies: "If you were born in an evil society, you should either have broken off all connections with it and sought a better one or you ought to have endeavoured to change your social environment in co-operation with others who likewise saw the evil." Islam does not want men to be tolerant to evil and injustice for fear of incurring the displeasure and wrath of those who happen to be in power. Those who put up with evil are, in its eyes, no better than evil doers. Thus it encourages a positive attitude towards life and is always on the side of those who fight to rectify evils, provided

their fight is not inspired by selfish personal or party ends, and is based upon a real hatred of evil. Those who see evil triumphant and retire to seek their own personal salvation, have no place of honour in Islamic society. Islam is not mere appendage to life, it is life itself. It cannot be broken up into 'national churches.' It sees life as a whole and treats it as one indivisible unity not to be broken up into fragments. The moral and religious attitude of Muslim ought to follow himself in all walks of life—social, political and economic. A Muslim cannot be a Muslim in the mosque and a nationalist or communist in politics. He is a Muslim everywhere.

Alone among the religions of the world, Islam created a state dominated by religious and moral motives, thereby teaching us that political power ought to be subordinated to ethical ends and that religion should not be allowed to serve the ends of a State which is not informed and actuated by moral ideals. Alone among the religions of the world, Islam made a reality of international brotherhood in which geographical, national and racial frontiers have no place, a brotherhood founded on

a common view of life and common principles of conduct, the only real and lasting brotherhood. Islam stands alone among the religions of the world, in repsect of its complete freedom from the domination of priests and from the burden of elaborate ceremonials. It is a priestless religion because it has done away with rituals and ceremonies.

Chapter III

FUNDAMENTAL TENETS OF ISLAM

The conception of God is the basis and foundation of Islam. From this basic conception all other tenets, principles and injunctions flow, as from a life-source. Take away this conception and whole edifice of Islam falls to the ground. Other religions too have had their conceptions of God, but these were defective, incomplete and sometimes misleading. This is the fundamental weakness of other religions which takes away much that is valuable in them. For to have a right conception of God is the first necessity of man's life. With a mistaken and defective conception of the divine Being, you will never be able to shape individual and collcetive life on proper lines, since you act and behave in the manner your conception of Him dictates you. The most vital factor in human behaviour is man's conception of his creator. If this conception errs on any side, his behaviour too will be affected adversely.

If there is God, as many people believe, the question immediately arises : What is His relation to His creatures and the World? How does He desire human life to be shaped? What is the law of His pleasure? Unless we have a clear answer to these questions, there is no use merely affirming His existence. It is meaningless to believe in God as modern Europe believes in Him. To the civilised Europe, God is merely the creator. Having created the world, He has retired to the seventh heaven and left man to do as he pleases and live as he pleases. With such a conception of God, it becomes unnecessary to know what is good or evil what is justice or injustice for if moral values and ethical standards have no relation with Him, Who, created us, they are no more than ideas based on expediency and shaped by social necessity. One hears the name of God repeated by the statesmen of belligerent countries in Europe and strangely enough according to their conception of Him. He seems to serve equally the national and imperial interests of both sides.

The role of Divinity has been reversed, man being the master whose causes and interests

God is called upon to serve. This sort of belief is worse than open disbelief. It is clear that if we really believe in Him, we must think of Him, not merely as Creator of the world, but as its Guide and Sustainer too. It is we who should serve the cause of God, for we are the servants and He, the Master. It is we who ought to seek out His will and shape our individual and collective life in accordance with it. As his creatures, it lies upon us to try to discover His cause and give up loyalty to all other causes, associating ourselves finally and irrevocably with Him.

We are thus logically led to believe in Divine Revelation for how shall we know His cause and discover His will except through His own self-Revelation? Not all the wisdom in the world can give us a knowledge of His attributes and how He wills us to shape our life.

The God in Islam has revealed His will through His chosen prophets. He has given us express commands to do some things and to abstain from doing certain things. Through His revelation, He has shown us how our individual and collective life should be shaped. He has not left the guidance of social affairs to

the whim of sovereign peoples, to be determined by the counting of heads, of sovereignty belongs to Him and to Him only. Any people who would usurp His sovereignty are rebels against Him. According to Islamic ideas, the whole life of man should be an act of worship to God. The offering of prayers and counting of beads is merely an outward worship, and when it is not supplemented by a total effort at living our individual, social, political and economic life in accordance with Divine will and Divine commands, it becomes a meaningless and fruitless ritual. The social and political aspects of life are, therefore, not excluded from the sovereign authority of God, as Western civilization would like them to be. We are already witnessing the disastrous consequences of doing away with God in political and social affairs and leaving them to the sole monopoly of the devil.

To those who would worship anything possessing the attributes of power and force Islam says, "Do not bow down before the rivers, the mountains, the sun and the moon, for none of these or other forces of nature has the least power to do you injury or benefit you

without the will of Him whose partial and incomplete manifestations they are. Do not treat any other authority human or supernatural, whether parliament, state, dictator, saint or philosopher as worthy of obedience in its own right." All obedience and loyalty is subject to the final and absolute loyalty to God and His commands as revealed through the Prophet. Obedience to other authorities can be rendered only in so far as their commands do not go against Divine commands. The doctrine of one God has thus the greatest political significance. It does away completely with the Divine right of kings and the sovereign right of peoples and parliaments. The Muslims cannot, by a mere vote of the majority, change one iota of the legal and moral precepts of the Quran. Not even by a unanimous vote can they legislate in opposition to the law of God. The nature of political allegiance is clearly and concisely stated in the Quranic command, "Obey God, obey the Prophet, and obey those in authority from amongst yourselves, but if there is difference of opinion (either amongst yourselves or with those who are in authority over you), turn to God and the Prophet (for a

decision).'' Thus God and the Prophet, that is, the Quran and the Sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet, are the final arbiters in all matters of dispute whether social, political or economic.

After belief in God, Islam insists on belief in survival after death. The conception of an after-life is a necessary corollary to the existence of God. Without belief in survival after death, it would be impossible for men and women to be moved to act in accordance with the Divine will and to shape their lives as required by that will. It is evident that so far as the life is concerned; we have been given complete moral freedom to obey or disobey, to choose the right path or the wrong one as we please. The consequences of evil actions do not always fall on the individual who is responsible for them; nor is virtue always rewarded in this world, although the consequences of evil deeds and good ones inevitably work themselves out in the long run. But, on the whole, it is true to say that there is no certainty that the consequences, good or evil, of individual actions shall reveal themselves fully in the lifetime of the individual. That they shall reveal themselves sometime or the other is, however,

beyond doubt or question. Such being the case, we are bound to come to conclusion, that, so far as the individual is concerned, the full consequences of his actions are held in store for another life. If there is to be no life after this one, there is no meaning in trying to be good and virtuous, when goodness and virtue do not always get their proper reward. The atheists and communist would reply that this is because there is no justice in the world, and that the universe is a chance product of matter having no intelligent purpose or goal before it. So the supporters of evolution argued in the time of Darwin. They built their house of sand on the evidence of evil and suffering in the world and maintained that it is in vain to look for justice in nature or life, since the process of evolution is not permeated by any intelligent purpose. But if the life process is not intelligently and purposively controlled and the universe is fundamentally irrational, what meaning there is in talking of reason, of social justice and of reform or revolution, in such a world? When the whole proces of evolution is blind and devoid of intelligent purpose, how can you set yourself against the current of life

and create justice, reason or well-being amidst the flow of a blind evolutionary process.

It is clear that neither evolution is unintelligent, nor is the world-movement devoid of rationality and justice. Having seen only the first act of the play you jump to the conclusion that it is a tragedy; let the drama unfold itself completely before you, and you will see the meaning behind all evil and suffering and purpose which it serves. As to the difficulty in believing that there is to be a second act to this play, that we shall again rise after death, to render our account before the Creator, it is sufficient to point out that the emergence of life from a mass of dead and inert matter is no less difficult to believe. The power which would create life out of dead matter, can surely re-create it after its dissolution.

Islam requires us to believe that we are all responsible beings and will one day have to render our account before God for all that we have done in our lives. It cannot be that the good and the virtuous are to go unrewarded and the evil doers escape their punishment,

simply because they have successfully eluded the police. Islam, however does not allow us to believe in a cycle of births and deaths. Nature does not give one chance after another to perfect yourselves. It puts you on trial only once and if you fail, it gives you no further trial. The cycle of birth is also meaningless in view of the fact that none of us knows for what sins of omission and commission we have been punished or rewarded with our present lives. Without a knowledge of one's previous record, what is the good of punishment or reward, since none of us knows what we have done or not done in our previous lives.

The third fundamental tenet of Islam is belief in the prophets of God. The Muslims are required to believe that God sent His prophets in all countries and among all the nations of the earth. The names of some of these have been mentioned in the Quran, while others have been left unmentioned. All the prophets were Divinely inspired and all had the same identical message for mankind, with such variations and differences as the social conditions of the times required. They all worked to the same end, persuading people to believe in

one God and render obedience to none but Him. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was the last of the prophets. Through him the Message of God was revealed to mankind in all its fullness. After Muhammad, there will be no more prophets since the Divine Message has been completed and stated so clearly as to require no interpreter. The whole life of the Prophet of Islam was a practical demonstration of how to live one's life according to the will of God. Muhammad was born in the full light of history in contrast with all other prophets whose lives are shrouded in mystery, since they were born and died in remote antiquity. On the other hand, the followers of Muhammad have preserved in minute details, every trait and feature of the Prophet's private character and public conduct. No other character in history has been so fully open to public gaze as the Prophet of Islam. It is this which gives him a unique position and marks him out as the model of perfection, in so far as perfection can belong to man. You cannot take other prophets as your standard, since you know so little about them. The Quran expressly enjoins on

Muslims the necessity of following the footsteps of the Prophet and of keeping him before their eyes as a model to be copied. The recorded words and acts of the Prophet are called Sunnah (traditions) and, after the Quran, they constitute the final authority for Muslims in all matters of individual, social and political life.

The Quran has repeatedly dinned it into the ears of Muslims, that the Prophet of Islam, along with other prophets, was no more than a messenger and a human being. This was necessary because the followers of other prophets fell into the error of attributing Divine and superhuman powers to the messengers of God. Thus after the death of Jesus Christ, Christians exalted him to the position of the son of God, and believed in three Gods who, somehow, constituted a single entity. The Quran removed this misconception and said that Christ was one of the great prophets of God, but that he was nothing more. Neither he nor any other human being including other prophets, can share any part of the Divine authority. Says the Quran, "Say, O Muham-

mad, I have no power over myself either in respect of injury or benefit except by the will of God. If I had any knowledge of the unseen world, I would have benefitted myself in many ways and neither injury nor adversity would have touched me. I am but a man who warns (evil-doers) and brings glad tidings (to the virtuous)." Islam thus undermined the belief in the supernatural powers of human being, since all power and authority belongs to God alone, and is not shared with Him by anybody else.

The fourth cardinal tenet of Islam is belief in the books of God. Many of the prophets were sent with books (i.e. Books were revealed to them). None of these books now exists in its original form, having been perverted after the death of the prophets, to whom the books were revealed. This perversion was affected by learned divines, who had become completely devoid of religious feelings, and were more afraid of their followers than they were afraid of God. The Quran is the last of these books and exists in its original purity to this day, a fact which is attested, even by non-Muslim scholars of repute, who do not deny that it is the same Book, word by word, as was revealed

to the Prophet of Islam. This remarkable achievement is due to the habit of memorising the Quran either in part or in whole. The Quran contains, apart from moral precepts and legal injunctions, passages which have the greatest social, political and economic importance and form the basis of Muslim law.

The Quran is the ultimate authority in all matters of dispute and of difference of opinion among the Muslims. He is not a Muslim who refuses to abide by its decisions. Its authority is so ultimate that, even if a tradition of the Prophet is contrary to its word or spirit, it is rejected as unreliable, for nothing that the Prophet did or said could have been against it. The moral and legal precepts of the Quran are unchangable and the ideals and values inculcated by it are eternally true in the eyes of Muslims. The Muslims can use their powers of reason in matters in which no specific guidance can be found in the Quran in the reliable traditions of the Prophet, but in matter over which the Quran or the traditions of the Prophet have pronounced a clear decision, Muslims are required merely to obey. They cannot plead that a particular decision of God

and the Prophet is not clear to their understanding. This is not the field in which a Muslim is allowed to pit his power of reasoning against the judgement of God and His Prophet. The role of reasoning in all such matters is limited to understanding the object behind a particular injunction and finding out the best means of carrying it out. In all other matters—and they are many—Muslims are not merely permitted but enjoined to use their understanding, provided the basic principles of Islam and its spirit undergo no violation. Reasoning is not excluded by Islam; it is merely subordinated to the Divine revelation and canalised. The Quran is thus the standard, the ideal by which all things are judged by a true Muslim. Instead of being pushed about hither and thither by momentry desires and needs, Muslims have something permanent and abiding to look up to. No Marx, no Darwin, no Bentham, no Nietzsche can mislead the Muslim society, so long as it adheres to the Quran as its final standard of judgement. No parliament, no state and no other authority can justify itself in the eyes of Muslims, unless it has the verdict of the Quran on its side; no

individual however highly placed, no leader, however popular, can win the moral approval and willing submission of Muslims, if his conduct does not conform to the standards and values made explicit by the Quran. The Quran is thus the shield of individual liberty in Islamic society. The Muslims have given up the kind of individual liberty which is in vogue in modern democracies, the liberty to do as one pleases and live as one pleases; they have gained a far more real and effective liberty, the liberty to repudiate all principles of actions and all forms of conduct not sanctified by the Quran. It is this which gave Muslims courage to face their worst despots whenever their conduct happened to go against the laws of God.

The question may be asked : how does Muslim society adjust itself to changing needs and circumstances, when its ideals, values and principles of life are unalterably fixed? The question is pertinent, but the answer is not far to seek. You do not expect a man with strength of character to change his principles with every gust of wind that blows. The man who changes his ideals and values with every stress of cir-

cumstance, is a man, in whom no normal strength is left. He is an opportunist, having no character. Similarly a living society with strength and vitality in its veins, is not blown hither and thither by the change of circumstances. It stands firm on its ideals and values and holds them aloft amidst the windy changes of life. What it does change is not the ends, the ideals or the principles which form its basis but the means for their realisation. The change is thus all in the realm of means, not in that of ends. Islam admits the necessity of change in order to make readjustments in altered circumstances. The Quran and the traditions of the Prophet have merely laid down the broad principles of individual and collective life, the policy, so to say, that Muslim society should at all times follow. The details have been left to be filled up as and when the circumstances require. Thus if a particular law fails, due to change of conditions, of the effect it was intended to produce, it may be changed so as to fulfil the object in view. The objects of law remaining the same, the law can be changed by consensus of opinion to meet new situations. Consensus of opinion,

however, does not mean a majority vote of the adult population or of members elected on that basis to form a parliament. It means the majority of those who are qualified by their knowledge and character to pronounce opinion on matters affecting the community. Moreover no consensus of opinion should go against the clear verdict of the Quran or the traditions.

Belief in the angels of God is the last fundamental tenet of Islam. We do not know much about angels, except that they are the servants of God and innocent creatures. They are incapable of sin, and in contrast with man, who has wide possibilities in him, who can raise himself to a level above that of angels or degrade himself to the rank of animals, the station of angels is fixed.

God, the Prophets, the Books, the Life Hereafter, and the Angels constitute the fundamental tenets of Islam and no man can be a Muslim who does not believe in all of them.

MINIMUM OBLIGATIONS

Immediately a man accepts the fundamental tenets outlined in the previous chapter and declares himself to be a Muslim, he is called upon to discharge the following four obligations:

(1) To offer prayers five times a day.
(2) To fast through the whole month of Ramazan.
(3) To pay the poor-tax, if he is liable to it.
(4) To offer pilgirimage to Mecca, at least once in lifetime, if he has the ncessary financial means to do so.

Prayer in Islam is collective. Although, individual prayer is permitted, it is by no means encouraged. The Prophet expressed great resentment at those able-bodied and healthy Muslims, who prayed at home, while they had a mosque nearby. The social significance of mass prayer, five times a day, can well be understood. In the mosque, there can be no distinction of the rich and the poor. All Muslims, irrespective of their social status, have to stand in a row and bow down before their Maker. It is impossible for men, so used

to daily contact, to keep up their soci distinctions. Prayer five times every day instead of once a day or once a week, has also its own object. When a man faces his Maker five times every day, it is naturally impossible for him, if he prays sincerely, to disregard those moral and spiritual values in daily conduct, which he believes to come from a Divine source. Prayer does not take much time. The longest prayer does not take more than fifteen to twenty minutes.

Fasting is enjoined on all healthy and adult Muslims through the whole month of Ramazan, nearly thirty continuous days. The very old and the sick have been exempted, provided the latter complete their fast after they have regained their health.

The pilgrimage to Mecca is an international gathering, where Muslims of diverse races and nationalities come together in the same prescribed dress and bear witness to the great brotherhood of Islam, which knows no racial or national frontiers. Only those Muslims are enjoined to go on pilgrimage, who have the necessary financial resources, who have discharged all their debts and married their

daughters, if the latter have come of age.

About the poor-tax, the reader may kindly see the chapter succeeding the next.

ISLAMIC IDEAL OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT

What is the ideal of a good character in Islam and what is the best form of conduct, which it desires its followers to live up to, may best be described in the words of the Quran itself. The following quotations will suffice:

"The Lord hath decreed, that ye worship none save Him, and (that ye show) kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, say not "Fie" unto them, nor repulse them but speak unto them a gracious word."

"And lower unto them the wing of submission through mercy, and say, "My Lord! have mercy on them both as they did care for me, when I was little."

"Your Lord is best aware of what is in your minds, if ye are righteous then He was for ever forgiving unto those who turn (unto Him)."

"Give the kinsman his due, and the needy and the wayfarer, and squander not thy wealth in wantonness."

"The squanderers were ever brothers of the devil, and the devil was ever an ingrate to his

Lord."

"But if thou turn away from them (parents) seeking mercy (livelihood) from thy Lord, for which thou hopest, then speak unto them a reasonable word."

"And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening, lest thou sit down rebuked, denuded."

"Thy Lord enlargeth the provision for whom He will and straiteneth (it for whom He will). He was ever knower, see-er of His servants."

"Slay not your children, fearing a fall to poverty. We shall provide for them and for you, the slaying of them is an abomination and an evil way."

"And slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save with right. Whosoever is slain wrongfully, We have given power unto his heir, but let him not commit excess in slaying, He will be helped."

"Come not near the wealth of the orphan, save with that which is better, till he come to strength; and keep your promises. You shall be held accountable for your promises."

"Fill the measure, when ye measure, and

weigh with a right balance, that is meet and better in the end."

"(O Man) follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. The hearing, the sight, and the heart of all of these thou shalt have to render thine account."

"And walk not on the earth exultant, thou can'st rend the earth, nor can'st thou stretch to the height of the hills."

"The evil of all that is hateful in the sight of the lord."

"The (faithful) servants of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly, and when foolish ones address them, answer, 'peace."

"And who spend the night before their Lord, prostrate and standing."

"And who say, 'Our Lord! avert form us the doom of Hell, the doom thereof is anguish.' It is wretched as abode and station."

"And those who, when they send, are neither prodigal nor grudging, and there is ever a firm station between the two."

"And those who cry not unto any other god along with Allah, nor take the life which Allah hath forbidden, save in (course of) justice, nor

commit adultery; and whoso doth this, shall pay the penalty."

"The doom will be doubled for him on the day of Resurrection, and he will abide there, in disdain, for ever."

"Save him who repenteth and doth righteous works; for such, Allah will change their evil deeds to good deeds. Allah is Forgiving, Merciful."

"And whosoever repenteth and doth good, the verily repenteth towards Allah with true repentance."

"And those who do not bear false witness but when they pass near senseless play, pass with dignity."

"And those who, when they are reminded of the revelation of their Lord, fall not deaf and blind thereat."

"And who say, 'Our Lord, vouchsafe us comfort of our wives and of our offsprings and make us pattern for (all) who ward off (evil)."

"They will be awarded the high place, forasmuch as they were steadfast, they will meet there with welcome and the word of

peace."

"Abiding there for ever. Happy it is as abode and stations."

Form the lines quoted above, the reader may have been enabled to form a rough idea of the kind of character and conduct Islam attempts to build up in the individuals who accept its creed and are prepared to live their lives in accordance with that creed. It is a character eminently practical, through by a reasonable regard for the rights of others without sacrificing one's own essential rights. Islam enjoins on you to follow the middle path in all human affairs, to give others what is their due, and, at the same time, to insist upon your own minimum well-beings as the indispensable pre-condition, without which you would not find it possible to work for the good of your fellow-men. In a word, it teaches you neither to be selfish to the point of infringing upon the rights of others, nor to be selfless to the extent of sacrificing your own individual well-being in a morbid fit of sentimentality. Islam would like you to steer clear of the two extremes, the one that leads to self-indulgence and luxurious living and involves, of necessity, the exploita-

tion of those who are beneath you in the scale of social gradation; the other that leads to self-mortification, monasticism and ascetic ways of life, and results in a defeatist attitude towards the problems of life. While Western materialism assesses all things in terms of material happiness and well-being, regarding earthly life and its comforts as the be-all and end-all of human existence; while Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism consider the earthly existence of man as of little account and turn their faces away from all physical pleasures, Islam recognises the essentially material basis of life and, making all reasonable allowance for it, tries, at the same time, to lift man out of purely material preoccupations, by bringing within his field of vision, things extra mundane. Matter, in Islam, is the basis from which, and out of which, the spirit struggles forth towards the Divine. It is the sine qua non of that struggle. To destroy that basis, would be to cut off the prop wherewith the spirit climbs up higher; to rest content with it, to get tied to it, is to sink to the purely material level, with no urge or desire for higher development.

Islam gives man a vision of his higher destiny and endeavours to create in him a measure of self-control, necessary for the realisation of that destiny. It wants men and women who can, where necessary, forego pleasures and comforts which come in the ways of collective well-being and the health of the body-politic. But self-control for its own sake, without end or purpose, and unenlightened by spiritual requirements or the demands of the moral situation, is the very negation of Islamic teaching. Development of will-power with a view to display or perform feats of spiritual strength, which is a kind of spiritual gymnastics, is repugnant to the Islamic way of thought. What is required in men and women is a consciousness of moral ends and readiness to make necessary sacrifices in money, health and comforts, only when they come in the way of achieving those ends. That is why the Quran condemned the Jews for placing themselves under unnecessary and totally uncalled for social restrictions and commanded the Muslims to take their pleasures as they liked, within the specific limits laid down by it. The Quran says that it

has not come with a mission to encumber men and women with unnecessary hardships and rules of discipline. What it wants, is that Muslims should not be completely uncontrolled in their habits and desires and that they should in all matters, observe those just limits specified by the Book and the example of the Holy Prophet, to go beyond which is to imperil the moral health of the community, and without which, it would not be possible for the individual human personality to develop its full potentialities. In Islam the health of the social organism and the moral development of the individual are closely bound up with each other, and both the individual and the social medium, in which he moves and has his being, are given their respective weight. Each has its rights clearly defined, with the relsult that, while the individual is not allowed to go his own way in selfish disregard of social responsibilities, society also is not permitted to trespass on the rights of the individuals. The ideal Muslim is one who pursues his moral progress and spiritual salvation in and through the social medium, by attempting to restore the moral balance of society in whatever

direction it shows signs of being upset. Islam thus requires individual purification, not in-monastic seclusion, which it has strictly and clearly prohibited, but through social struggle, through the efforts of the individual to purify the social medium and purge it of evils which, in some measure of or other, afflict it at all times. This is the true meaning of the doctrine of 'Jehad' which is one of the cardinal teachings of Islam. Actual warfare against social miscreants and rulers who do not observe the social laws of Islam is merely the last stage of process called 'Jehad' when all methods of peaceful persuasion have been tried without success.

THE ECONOMIC SYSTEM OF ISLAM

Before anything is said about the economics of Islam, one important fact should be clearly grasped. Islam is not directly concerned with political and economic systems, but indirectly and, in so far as political and economic affairs influence man's ethical conduct, it does lay down some very important principles of economic life. Another point to be borne in mind is that no religion which claims to offer guidance for all times and places, can directly involve itself in economic and political theorising. For economic and political systems are subject to changes with technological developments. Islam would not have been the universal religion and eternal truth that it is, if it had rigidly allied itself to particular economic doctrines or political systems.

With this in mind, we may proceed to discover what Islam has to say about the economic life of man. On the negative side, we find that Islam has strictly prohibited all forms of interest. Muslims influenced by Western ideas argue apologetically that the interest prohibited by Islam is the interest charged on

unproductive money, that is, interest charged by the moneylenders on money borrowed for private use. But there is nothing in the Quran or the traditions of the Prophet to show that any reservation has been made with regard to the kind of interest which may be permitted. People who argue like this, forget that the capitalist system of modern times, with its exploitation of the poor, rests on the charging of interest on productive money. Take away this prop of capitalism and it goes to pieces. Since Islam gives no quarter to any system of exploitation, it has forbidden all interest, whether on productive money or unproductive money. But Islam does allow the making of profits. Now what is the difference between profits and interest? The difference, broadly is, that the rate of interest is fixed before the profits are assessed or even business started. A banker can say, "We will give you five per cent interest if you deposit money in our bank." But if it is a question of profits, he can only say, "Deposit your money, and you will get a proportionate share of profits, when they are assessed." Now, this difference between the two is of tremendous significance. A man who

invests his money on interest, refuses to share the risks of the business but insists on having his pound of flesh in the profits. This is an immoral attitude, the attitude of the exploiter. On the other hand, if money is invested on the basis of profits, the investor is bound to be actively interested in the business, for he stands to gain or lose with the fluctuation of business. Another noticeable difference is, that if you get interest on the money you invest, you are not concerned at all with the surplus of profits left after interest has been distributed. You leave to the bankers and financiers all that remains after paying out interest. All this money goes to the pockets of the capitalist class. It is clear that if interest is abolished, banking in its present form will have to go, for the banks exist by paying out interest to their depositors and appropriating all surplus profits. For example, if a bank has 1000 depositors, each having Rs. 500 as deposits, and pays interest at the rate of 4%, at the end of the year, it will have to pay a total sum of Rs. 20,000 to its depositors. But it may actually make an annual profit of Rs. 60,000. It is clear that in this case it gets away with

Rs. 40,000 annually, all this money going to the pocket of the exploiter class. In case banking is based on profits, the bank will have to distribute the wholesome of Rs. 60,000 to its depositors minus such some of money as it may charge for the services it renders.

The legalisation of interest in modern days has made the banking system a positive hindrance in the way of industrial and commercial prosperity. The banks which lend out money on interest to the industrialists and traders are not joint shares in business and industry. They have their own independent interests to look after. They are out to make money, irrespective of the conditions of trade and industry. Thus in a period of depression, when the banks can help a great deal towards recovery by the lending out money freely, they usually contract credit by rising the rate of interest so that they make the conditions still worst. Similarly, in a period of boom, when they should stay their hands and not allow credit expansion to go beyond reasonable litmits, they are seized by an insatiable desire to gain more and more money. Therefore, they lower the rate of interest and create an unnatural

expansion credit thus helping to accelerate the movement towards industrial crisis. It is clear that the system of charging interest is at the bottom of the mischief. If banks are run on the basis of profits jointly shared by trade and industry, they will become partners and co-workers with industry and will not develop any independent interests of their own antagonistic to those of industry.

On the positive side Islam has enjoined its followers to pay the poor-tax. Payment of this tax is obligatory and not optional. The taxes paid to the Islamic state, but if there is no Islamic state, the Muslims can spend it individually and collectively on their poor kinsmen, on the needy and the wayfarer. The poor-tax is tax on savings, in the case of those not engaged in trade and industry. Muslims who have saved Rs. 52 or more are required to pay 2% of their savings as poor-tax. For those engaged in trade and industry, the poor-tax takes the form of tax on industrial and trade goods. Thus the whole agricultural produce of a Muslim cultivator over and above what is required for his private use, and all the manufactured articles and goods of those

engaged in trades and industry, are liable to poor-tax. The poor-tax is also charged on mines and treasure-troves, owned by individuals, but the rate of taxation is much higher (i.e.20%) in this case.

The poor-tax, according to the Quran, can only be spent on : 1. The needy. 2. The poor people involved in debts. 3. The collectors of the tax, in the shape of emoluments paid to them. 4. Manumission of slaves. 5. Neo-Muslims who need financial help. It will be seen that the poor-tax is a tax over and above all the other taxes which the state may levy. The state cannot plead, "we have had so much taxation that the people can pay no more taxes." Whatever the other taxes people may pay, the poor-tax is the first charge on them, since it is levied by God. The amount collected from the poor-tax cannot be spent in any other manner than that specified above. It is a tax specially set apart for the relief of poverty. All other taxes the state spends on activities which benefit the rich as well as the poor; but the poor-tax is specially meant for the poor. It is thus apparent that a modern Islamic state will, in addition to undertaking social services, like

education, medical relief and other services, the benefits of which are equally shared by the rich and the poor, still have a reserve to draw upon for the relief of poverty, since the amount collected as poor-tax cannot be spent on medical relief or education or any other activity, the benefits of which are shared by men of means. It goes without saying that the poor-tax will not be likely to create or encourage idleness. In view of the fact that the poor-tax is a tax on savings and a tax on industrial and commercial goods and a tax on mines and treasure troves owned by individuals, it is clear that, under a modern Islamic state, there is little likelihood of unemployment or general poverty.

Another factor of great economic importance in Islam is the Islamic law of inheritance. According to Muslim law, if a man dies leaving property, it will have to be divided among the male and female children of the deceased, and in certain cases even among near relation. On account of this law, no estate or property however large, can remain in the hands of a few individuals. The largest estate on this basis of division will be widely distributed and

shared in the source of two or three generations. In contrast with the law of primogeniture, generally prevailing in Western countries, the Islamic law of inheritance cuts at the root of capitalistic, accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few individuals. Moreover, the property of a man who dies childless passes on to the state according to the Islamic law, because Islam does not recognise the system of adoption.

THE FAMILY AND THE POSITION OF WOMEN

No sound social structure can be built without a stable family life. Family is the natural unit of the social aggregate; it is the training ground in mutual affection and social co-operation. It is only through loving our own sons and daughters, our parents and kinsmen, that we learn to feel affection and sympathy for others. No society can live and endure in which family life shows signs of disruption. The tendencies which lead to the break-up of the family; spell the doom of a civilization. To break-up the family is to break-up social life, for no more natural social unit can be substituted in its place.

It is for this reason that Islam has discouraged all social and economic habits which lead to the break-up of the family. One of the chief causes of social disintegration and instability of family life is sexual indulgence. A nation which does not observe sexual morality or fails to punish promiscuous sexual relations, is bound to go down through sheer physical and moral degeneration. A people in

whom sexual laxity is a matter of common occurance can never concentrate in energies on any collective effort. Sexual laxity has been the most potent factor in the military defeat of all peoples in history, since it is inconsistent with single-hearted devotion to collective ideals.

And yet the sexual desire in man is the strongest and most powerful after the desire of food. Is is so strong and urgent that even in the absence of all temptation, it demands urgent satisfaction through sheer physical energy. In case of recurring temptation, no man, however strong-willed, can withstand its urgency. Thus the problem of safeguarding the people's vitality and ensuring a healthy and stable family life, demands that ways and means should be found to satisfy men's sexual desire, without allowing them to go to excess and break all moral restraints.

With a view to achieve this end, Islam follows, as in all other matters, the twin method of inner self-discipline and external restraint. The self-discipline spoken of, comes through the belief in God and the life hereafter, with the consequent desire to avoid whatever course of action involves disobe-

dience to His commands. This is the surest method of inner self-discipline and without this even external restraint is of little avail. If the love of God and fear of His displeasure is constantly with man, it creates, in due course, a settled habit of virtue, for which one has to struggle in the first stages. In the second place, the punishment of sexual immorality is so severe in Islam that no Muslim dare disobey divine commands in this respect, if he is sure that the punishment will be meted out to him by the Islamic state. But so strong is sexual desire in the generality of men and women that even the above two preventives may fail of their effect if social life provides recurring occasions for sexual temptation. In a society where men and women mix freely with each other without restraint, occasions for temptations are common enough and numerous, and where there are such great and frequent temptations for sexual laxity, not even the fear of law can keep ordinary men and women of the path of chastity. An exception may be made in favour of individuals who possess uncommon strength of will, but such people constitute a microscopic minority. For this reason Islam

has forbidden men and women to mix freely with each other. Free social intermingling of the sexes, such as civilized West boasts of, is stricly and clearly prohibited by Islam. Women according to the Quran, should not ordinarily go out of their homes except when forced by sheer economic necessity, or when the demands of abnormal times, as in war, call them for outside duties. Even if forced to go out, women should dress and conduct themselves in a way so as not to attract the male passers-by. Neither their gait nor their dress should be such as to offer temptation. At home too, women are forbidden to use those forms of dress which expose any part of their body in a manner so as to tempt those of their male relations who visit them or live in the same quarters with them.

Islam desires that the society of men and women should be separated from each other and that women should have their own company in which members of the other sex should not mix with them. It is true that the segregation of women creates certain difficulties are by no means insuperable. They can be surmounted with a little effort and patience. Even

if they do lead to comparative ignorance in women, this small evil may be put up for the sake of avoiding the far more dangerous and destructive evil of sexual immorality and the physical and moral degeneration consequent on it, which is sure to follow from the free intermingling of men and women in daily social life. After all the claims of character must be given precedence over the claims of knowledge and enlightenment, if a conflict between the two is inevitable.

Islam has given the right of divorce to both men and women, to the latter with certain conditions. This is absolutely necessary, because in the case of deep quarrel between the husband and the wife or constant maltreatment of one by the other. It is much better to get the partners separated, rather than poison the sweetness of home-life, without which a stable home is inconceivable. A partnership, in the true sense of the word, lasts only until the two parties associate with each other freely and of their own accord. Men cannot, however, divorce their wives without payment to them of the dowry stipulated at the time of marriage. The woman also can procure

divource in a law-court, if she can show evidence of maltreatment by her husband, or if her husband is impotent or suffers from a contagious disease, such as leprosy, or is unable to provide his wife with minimum subsistence, but in such cases the woman will have to forego her stipulated dowry.

Islam has also given women property rights. If a man dies leaving property, all his sons and daughters will inherit the father's property, the male issues getting twice as much as the daughters. If a man's wife inherits property or acquires it by her own economic efforts, it will belong to her and her husband will have no right over it, except by her permission. It will be seen from what has been said above, that Islam has done everything possible to secure a better social status for women, but it has not given them complete equality with men, for such equality is both unnatural and impossible. Women, under Islam, both widows and unmarried girls, are given freedom to choose their husbands as they like. What Islam never tolerates is that women should consent to become the playthings of men and a mere source of pleasure and entertainment to the

opposite sex.

Western society stands on a false ideal of equality between men and women. This fals equality has, instead of improving the status of women, actually degraded them. For, in the desire and effort to be the equal of men, Western women have forgotten that motherhood is their greatest privilege and highest honour. The woman who passes most of her life in providing attraction and amusement for men and other than her husband, which neglects her home affairs and household duties, she cannot look after children, and is unwilling to suffer the discomforts which home life and the rearing of children must necessarily involve, instead of being the paragon of excellence that she is held to be, is positively a hateful creature. The energy of a woman is not inexhaustible and cannot bear the double strain of making an economic living as well as bringing up children. Can anyone expect a woman to work in an office, shop or factory for eight hours a day and still have the zeal and devotion towards her children that is required of a good mother? True respect for women can never spring from their attrac-

tiveness or graces or entertaining manners. It is only when women prove themselves good daughters, good wives and good mothers that they earn the respect of men. The respect shown them in Western society is unreal, since it is founded on female attractiveness and female graces rather than on the realization of their important role as mothers and guardians of the race.

Western society gives greater respect to those women who refuse to accept responsibilities of motherhood and try to develop manly characterstics through participation in economic, athletic and other activities which, properly speaking, lie outside their sphere of action. Apart from the fact that this effort on the part of women to do all that men have done or are suffering, it also goes to prove that in the West woman is respected when and in so far as she divests herself of feminine characterstics. Woman, as woman, has still to gain her respect in Western society.

TREATMENT WITH NON-MUSLIMS

Islamic society is based on a common creed, common mode of living and a common social and ethical ideal. It cannot, therefore, treat those who do not believe in its ideal and principles as it treats its own members. This is the only natural division of men. All other divisions based on nationality, geographical and racial frontiers are unnatural. Islam is the greatest foe of nationalist creeds which make no distinction in respect of men's beliefs, their attitude towards life and their principles of conduct, if the mere accident of birth has placed them under a common political or geographical frontier. National groups have no room for ethical standards in relation to one another and in relation to the minorities under them. Their favourite cry is, "My country right or wrong," and what religion or creed can do away with the distinction between right and wrong, good and evil, without stultifying itself? Frightened by the excesses of their favourite national gods, the Western statesmen are now talking of world federation and international unity. The ideal of world

unity and an international federation is an utterly impracticable ideal. The widespread distress born of the capitalist regime is promoting a sense of oneness and creating the idea of world-unity under a socialist or communist regime. But all this is a deception and a mirage, for the simple reason that a unity born of common political subjection is an artificial and negative unity which will be rent asunder as soon as the distress or subjection comes to an end. Unity, to be real, must be positive, that is, based upon common ideals of life, common modes of thought and action; and since it is impossible that all men would ever believe in the same ideals and follow identical principles, world unity is an utopian dream. Since it is not possible for all mankind to agree to one and the same set of principles or follow the common way of life, and some sort of division must remain, it is better that it should rest on matters of principles and man's view of his place in the universe and his ultimate destiny, rather than on racial and national distinctions, for these allow on ethical and moral standards. It is for this reason that Islam divides mankind into believers and non-

believers, and does not permit divisions based on geographical or racial frontiers. All non-Muslims are considered by Islam to be potential Muslims who can be won over to the right side. Muslims are, therefore, enjoined to be fair and just in their dealings with non-Muslims and by the nobility of their character establish their moral superiority over them. Islam recognises that there is no force greater than nobility and strength of character which can bring non-Muslims nearer to Islam. Neither physical force nor monetary temptations can create sincere belief. The only way to convert the other man to your views and principles is to demonstrate that your views and principles lead to higher type of charcater. Thus, if Muslims are unfair and unjust towards non-Muslims, they will leave a bad impression of Islam on their minds and injure rather than benefit their religion. That is why, so long as Muslims really cared for Islam and did not become world-seekers, they were always generous to non-Muslims and treated them specially well. When they lost the missionary zeal and became devoted to their worldly interest, they undermined the strength

of Islam and thereby ruined their own prospects, since Muslims rise and fall with Islam.

In abnormal times, however, during war or when Muslims are threatened by their enemies, they are bidden to make a sharp distinction among non-Muslims, between those who are either friendly or neutral towards them and those who are their enemies or act as fifth columnists. Towards the latter type of non-Muslims, the followers of Islam are commanded to show neither friendliness nor sympathy, but treat them as enemies should be treated.

WHAT IS WRONG WITH MUSLIMS ?

Muslims came to India not in the spirit of missionaries, not as representatives of world movement which Islam undoubtedly was, but as conquerors to dominate and exploit a subject land. The original impetus of Islamic movement had very nearly spent itself, when the Ghaznavies and Ghories established their rule in India. It is true that, even as exploiters and conquerors, they were not so bad as some of the modern 'civilized' nations. Islam was too much of a beneficent force for that to happen. Yet this cannot disguise from us the fact that unlike Arabs, who were the true representatives of Islam, tha later Muslim conquerors were actuated more by economic and worldly motives than by disinterested religious zeal. The difference can well be seen in the Arab conquest of Sind. The conquest of Sind by the Arabs was never complete and their hold over that province was shaky. They did not settle down in peace to carry on the work of pacification and yet they left behind a province, sixty per cent of whose population is

Muslim. Compare with this the long rule of the Pathans, the Lodhies, and the Moghuls in the north-west of India, where they settled down to carry on their administration and continued to rule firmly for over five hundred years. The province of Delhi which was the seat of these Muslim rulers, does not contain even a bare majority of Muslims. No impartial man can deny that the difference is due to the spirit in which the conquest was made and the treatment that was meted out to the conquered.

It is because the later Muslim conquerors did not live up to Islamic principles, that they left behind a legacy of hatred and bitterness that has led to the present Hindu-Muslim conflict. In the Hindu-Muslim struggle that is going on now, the Muslims have taken up a hostile attitude towards Hindus, and this mutual hostility has resulted in the creation of two opposition blocks leading to the talk of a Muslim nation in India. Hindu nationalism has had its reaction in Muslim nationalism, with the result that Muslims have forgotten their true position and begun to talk in Western vocabulary. It is time now that a halt is made to this talk of a Muslim nation in In-

dia. The Muslims can never be a nation in the true sense of the word. A nation, in its modern sense, is a group of individuals brought together by the accident of birth in a common geographical, political, or racial frontier. On the other hand, Muslim nationality is founded upon a common creed and common spiritual and ethical values. Any individual, belonging to whatever race, colour or clime may join Muslim nationality, if he accepts the creed and principles of Islam. An African Negro, an American or a Chinaman, may become a Muslim, if he embraces Islam, much more to his Muslim brethren than one of their own kith and kin, if he does not believe in Islam. The Muslims, therefore, are not a nation; they are missionaries of a world message and representatives of the greatest world movement yet known to history. It is time that Muslims realise this truth and conform their conduct to it, instead of running after their supposed national interests. It is the duty of Muslims, if they really believe in Islam, to offer the message of truth to other peoples and nation and to persuade them to come over to the right side in the perpetual struggle between good

and evil.

Unfortunately, so little of Islam is left among the present-day Muslims that, instead of coming forward as the standard-bearers of a spiritual message and offering guidance to those who grope in the dark after imaginary objects of worship, they are busy befending their national interests. Muslims should remember that Islam offers them a better method of safeguarding their material interests by lifting them to a higher plane where they cease to have exclusive regard for their sectional and national interests and work for the common good of humanity, wherein lies their own particular good. When their deeds and actions prove beyond doubt that they are not actuated by a selfish consideration of their own good, and that they are working for the larger interests of humanity, the opposing national and sectional groups cease to regard them as dangerous, examine their religious creed, become interested in the message of truth they offer them, and ultimately a great majority of them come over to the side of Islam as brothers and co-workers, leaving only those who are either incapable of recognising

truth or are uninterested in it. Sooner or later these elements come into clash with Muslims and are clean swept away the moral and physical force that the Muslims are able to muster against them.

But the living spirit of true religion seems to have gone out of Muslims and a lifeless religion has taken its place; for to be truly religious is to love God deeply and intensely, so that even your daily conduct bears the impression of that love and you are ready to sacrifice all that you can for making His message supreme and effective in human affairs. The test of love is sacrifice. Look upon a mother; how she sacrifices her sleep, her comforts and her pleasures for the sake of her children. What would you say of her, if she were unwilling to sacrifice any part of her comforts and pleasures in the service of her children? Would you believe her protestation of love? There is no love without readiness to sacrifices for the attainment of what you love. How far are the present-day Muslims, including those who lead a religious life, ready and willing to sacrifice their money, their wealth, their comforts, and pleasures for what

they believe to be the right cause, the cause of Islam? Muslims proclaim that they are believers in God and in the hereafter life. But what does that belief imply? Is it mere lip-service or tall talk? Has it nothing to do with one's conduct and action? Does belief mean anything else than a depth of feeling spontaneously finding expression in individual conduct and collecitve behaviour? If Muslims believe in God and in the hereafter, how do they differ in their individual and collective behaviour from non-Muslims? There is no sense in asserting that we believe in God and life after death, if our deeds and actions do not assume a different complexion from those of men who do not believe in God. Beliefs and actions are indissolubly linked together. There is no belief, that does not result in appropriate action. Mere affirmation of a fact is not tantamount to belief in it. Muslims would be right if they claim that the do not deny God; they are wrong when they claim that they believe in Him. The whole life of an average Muslim in these days is a flat denial and repudiation of those ideals for which Islam stands. When did Islam teach submission to evil and injustice?

When did it permit Muslims to love and choose un-Islamic ways in preference to those approved by Islam? The whole world is filled with un-Islamic ideas and modes of living. What are the Muslims doing to counteract them and to bring the world back to right ideals and modes of life? Even those Muslims who have some relic of the religious spirit left in them, think that prayers, fasts and social duties exhaust the essentials of Islam. While it is sure that these things do form a part of religion, they do not cover the whole ground. Islam is much more than prayers fasts and social duties. It is a world movement for moral and spritual regeneration, and spiritual values in Islam have a close connection with secular and material aspects of life. What is morality and spiritualism for, if it does not transform men's material and secular life? What are prayers meant for, except to create that firmness of spirit and strength of faith which shrinks from no sacrifice in unpholding religious and moral values in the daily political and economic life of men and women. Religion is not an apparel that can be put on or taken off at will. It is the pivot, round which,

man's entire life should move. Islam was an effective force when it formed the pivot of Muslims' life. But what is the present position? Individual selfish ends, promotion in official career, success in business, maintenance of social status, family ends and political ambitions, these are the pivots on which the life of Muslims moves. Let us cease talking of belief in God and of our attachment to Islam, unless we revolutionise our own life and shape it in the manner required by our Creator, and, then proceed to change the whole world. It is than that Islam will become an effective force in human affairs and it is then that the dark course of modern Western civilization will be lifted, and the way paved for a nobler and better type of living.